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SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTRY HUMAN RIGHTS LEAD FOCUSING ON PRISON INSPECTIONS; DEVELOPING OTHER CAPABILITIES

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford, for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. In a May 24 conversation, MoD's Human Rights lead Iman Naji told PolOffs that her office is developing the capacity to receive and address MoD human rights abuse complaints, but right now is primarily focusing on detainee abuse. Naji's directorate, located within the Inspector General's office, is comprised of seven staff members. The members conduct twice weekly inspections of 19 MoD detention facilities. Her office also receives personnel complaints and provides follow-up assistance on an ad hoc basis for MoD personnel who have been the victims of attacks.

¶2. (C) Of the detention facilities her office has visited, Naji complained that one in particular had shown signs of consistent neglect and abuse: a Muthana facility belonging to the third Brigade, 6 Division. According to Naji, detainees in that facility have been found several times in extremely overcrowded conditions -- blindfolded, handcuffed and with limited access to food and sanitary facilities. Naji reported on May 24 that follow-up action has been taken, and that those responsible for the abuse were found negligent and removed from their positions.

¶3. (C) Naji told PolOff that her office also attempts to provide ad hoc assistance to employees who have miscellaneous complaints. For example, her office is currently assisting a former employee who was fired for bringing alcohol into the Ministry. In another example, she told PolOff her office is helping an employee, who was kidnapped and seriously injured, to request monetary compensation or other types of benefits from the MOD and the Ministry of Human Rights. Overall, she explained, her office is continuing to develop its role, especially as more staff is hired. She said she hopes to develop a comprehensive database that will store, track, and assess this information. Naji acknowledged that she does not yet have the personnel capability to do this.

¶4. (C) Comment: The human rights section within MoD is still developing not only its capacity, but also its mandate. We will continue to meet with Naji to monitor her efforts to track human rights abuses. Naji who is originally from Baghdad, received her engineering degree from a college in Mosul. She has worked at MoD over the past three years and prior to that she worked at the Ministry of Health.  
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